A LOUISIANA ROMANCE

By Gavin Lodge Payne.

When Madame Duemont sued the foppish Garcia, people laughed at the grounds she set out in her complaint. She who was so beautiful and fascinating, bringing herself so prominently before the gossiping public, even while the cement on her crabbed old husband's tomb, in St. Louis, was still damp! Would not a jury vote that the death of the Madame's husband was a matter of benefits, and not a matter of damages, as Madame insisted in her demand that Garcia pay her thousands of dollars? If Madame were not so serious in her suit, her action would be droll rather than ridiculous. She said that Garcia, by depriving her of a husband, caused her great distress of mind, not to mention the physical inconvenience brought about by successive prostrations—prostrations of grief at that. Yet everybody knew that Garcia loved the madame madly before she became the wife of Duemont; that she would have married Garcia had it not been for an obdurate papa; further, that Duemont had not been possessed of wealth for several years preceding his unfortunate end. The developed complication worried the curious neighbors almost to a frenzy.

To say the madame was unsophisticated once upon a time not many years previous to her husband's death is not to imply that she was in the closest touch with the world after Duemont died. The neighbors were in doubt themselves on this point. Naive masks are not uncommon among these charming girls from the upper coast plantations. They are masks that wear well, too. A strolling artist who had painted a miniature of madame while she yet lived on the plantation, brightened the plain porcelain with an exquisite face, lacking a trifle in contour, perhaps, yet expressive of decided witchery. The portrait might speak of latent, threatening fire in those eyes, or it might express intense faith. At the least an itinerant painter is apt to sacrifice a true expression for a happy effect, and it may be that the eyes of the portrait were a pair merely borrowed from his ideals. The painter, it would seem from Madame's after life, painted better than he knew, or else he was the first to find the delicate poise of her character, her life, her very being itself. In such characters the weight of trifles is ponderous.

Duemont came to the plantation the first time on business. He made sacrifices to visit the place a second time, and after that there was no disguising the object of his trips. Amelie found the monotony of plantation life agreeably broken. The man from New Orleans told of balls, gay masques, the festivities of carnival season, and the hundreds of delights that make life sensuous in the old creole capital. A man who moved among these things was a god to her. She had heard her pious mother condemn these affairs at the gay city, and it was well, thought the mother, not to educate the daughter within sound of the revelries. So Amelie had been sent to a convent up the river. When Duemont came to the plantation there was no mother to forestall these stories that he poured into the girl's ears. Papa was indifferent to everything save his cups. He supposed after a while Duemont, in the natural order of events, would ask for the hand of Amelie; there would be a grand wedding, Amelie would go to New Orleans, and he, the morose planter, would be left alone to his indulgences and excesses. So it all came about eventually, but not until after Felix Garcia had disputed unsuccessfully for the same honor that Duemont sought. Felix, too, came to the plantation for the first time on business. He was interested in cane shipments from the neighborhood and reported wealthy. Much younger was he than Duemont, more frivolous and much more dangerous to the peace and welfare of so young and ingenuous a girl as Amelie. Perhaps Amelie was moved by the ardent protestations which he coupled with his declarations of love, but quite wisely, as the world thought, she obeyed papa and married Mons. Duemont.

After the fashion of a certain type of hot-headed lovers to be found in warm lands, Garcia continued his importunities after the grand wedding. He quarreled with the groom, angered the father by his antics, and proposed to Amelie that she elope with him to some distant land. He was on the boat to the city—the same boat that the bridal couple were aboard. The rage of the husband was smothered; it would not do to have a scene so soon after the ceremony. Amelie was discreet, avoiding Garcia. At one meeting on the boat she begged him to keep apart, to cease making her honeymoon wretched, to forget her and to remember that she was the wife of another. Such noble sacrifices were as far from his selfish, impetuous nature as a dead saint from deep sin. At the age of thirty Garcia was disgustingly boastful, deceitful, yet withal attractive to a woman. He was one of those incongruous types, where nature has bestowed graces of manner as a foil for the sharp foibles of an eccentric moral temperament. Talking to a woman, he could by a delicate drooping of the lids and a slight inclination of the head make her conscious that he was all attention and showing her the greatest deference. To do this without studious effort is both an art and an accomplishment. His gaze moved with a subtle sympathy. Yet, when crossed, he did not immediately become vengeful, nor bide his time like a stealthy enemy. He responded with a persistent bluster that was silenced only by a healthy rebuke. Temporizing with him only added fuel to flames. Such a nature would be dubbed a despicable one by his nobler enemies.

If Duemont had met Garcia face to face and quite properly branded him as he justly deserved, this story would have no substance as a story. The littleness of his own nature suggested that he avoid the rash young man and trust to the effects of time to perfectly establish his peace and happiness in the family relation. Rather than furnish gossip for their acquaintances on the boat, Duemont met and talked to Garcia with a semblance of cordiality. It is human nature to conceal wounded pride. At the New Orleans levee Duemont bade Garcia good-bye with a smile, but he did not invite the younger man to call at the beautiful home that he had provided for his bride.

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Those who visit Louisiana for the first time admire the grand old live oaks with their funereal draping of moss, but to the young bride of Duemont they were like mighty sentinels to keep away from the Duemont place all that might make life enjoyable to her. They stood in solemn array, a most heartless group of trees. The trellises of Sol Fa Terre roses, the overpowering magnolias nor the sweet jasmines had charm for the madame. She had all these things at her plantation home. It was only a short time after the nuptials that Duemont began to spend evenings at the clubs. He allowed the madame to dress one evening for the opera, and then, as he candidly admitted afterwards, forgot the engagement. The young girl was sorely disappointed. Much had been promised her; little had she seen. She had a strong impulse to open a note she had received from Garcia, but, dutiful to a certain degree, she returned it unopened. She thought of her enamored lover for a few days and then turned her thoughts to other channels. This was also dutiful to a certain degree. Duemont did not often refer to Garcia, nor did his wife manifest any apparent concern in the young man's welfare when the name was broached.

One evening, however, Duemont came home early to dinner, and not until the coffee was reached did he deign to talk with Madame, save to answer her questions in monosyllables. Something was chafing him, but he concealed it well till his wife happened to speak of Garcia. The name seemed to work a marvelous change in old Mons. Duemont. The madame anticipated a storm from the threatening brow, but instead, the husband began to talk to her in a strangely pathetic voice, in a strain she had never before heard. With just a suggestion of a sigh and a shrugging of the shoulders he told her that his small fortune had melted away in a day. He had been so unfortunate in cotton futures. This was not an unusual tale for a Southern wife to hear. Madame did not realize the import of this statement made by her husband, and besides, she was beginning to feel a new sensation; an indescribable something that was drawing her closer and closer to her husband. It was the first time since their marriage that he had confided in her. Pausing a moment to rattle his cup in the saucer, he began to talk of Garcia. Well—to put Duemont's further story in a few words—the impudent Garcia had, in Duemont's presence at a club, sneered at the efforts of old men to make life happy for their young wives. This was not all. Garcia drew a hypothetical case that brought the blood to Duemont's face. "An old dyspeptic and a charming young wife" were the last words Garcia uttered before Duemont had floored him with a cane.

"What else?" asked Madame.

"Amelie," falteringly continued the husband, "it never dawned upon me until then what a brute I had been. You are young and I am old. I have given you no measure of happiness. Before I met you I had lived too much for myself. My own selfishness has been a barrier between us; it is for me alone to break it down. If you had loved that wretch, I would have saved you in marrying you, but,—" and here he hesitated for a moment, "if you loved some other one I wronged you in forcing my hand upon you."

The young woman protested that she loved only him, Duemont. She threw her arms about his neck, and on that evening was one of those strange scenes where a mismated couple come into a new relation. The Madame forgot that there ever was such a matter as gayety in the Creole capital. The old sentinel oaks lost their occupation then and there.

Madame Duemont's happiness might have been continued for an indefinite time had it not been for the most untoward circumstances. Her husband expected a challenge from the man whom he had knocked to the floor with a cane. Such things as duels were in vogue then. Singularly enough, no message came, and Duemont was ready to rest in the belief that Garcia was an arrant coward. Those days were days of the yellow fever. It was early in the summer, and the wagon teams had not yet begun to drive in a gallop to the burying ground. Here and there were isolated cases, forming the nuclei for epidemic districts. Doctors were busy at all hours of the day and night, and a hope prevailed in many quarters that the dread plague would be confined to certain portions of the city. Such a hope was futile, yet for a brief while the epidemic spread slowly, as the heat of summer had not yet come on. Madame Duemont's servant was among those first attacked. Duemont, with a broader charity since he had fallen in love with his wife, manifested a concern in the fate of his servant and rashly went with the doctor to the house in which she was confined. Duemont himself was seized with the malady and despite his protests his wife insisted on nursing him. This all happened within a few days. It takes the fever but a short time to run its course and then begins the dangerous period of convalescence. There are many things that will cause a fatal relapse, and among them, say the doctors, is a sudden surprise or excitement. The Garcia incident had almost been forgotten in the dangerous illness of Duemont, but one afternoon, three weeks after the affair at the club, a messenger came up the walk to the Duemont place, and asked that a note be sent in to the patient. The note was handed Duemont as he sat in a big easy chair on the gallery. His wife was by his side. The husband read the note, and then tossed it aside. His voice was feeble as he spoke to her. The note was the tardy challenge from Garcia. It asked that Duemont name a friend who would meet a friend of Garcia's, at a certain hour and at a certain place.

That night Duemont raved. His lips became parched and he cried for water. The circles about his eyes darkened again, and it was evident a relapse was setting in. In his delirium he denounced Garcia as a poltroon, unworthy of the satisfaction accorded gentlemen; he alternately bemoaned his penniless condition and ranted against the man who had brought so much unhappiness to him. His devoted wife bent over him when his voice changed to a whisper.

"He knew I could not meet him—the scoundrel," almost hissed the sick man. "Amelie, I leave you nothing; even this place is the property of my creditors. Forgive me for the misery I have dragged you into. Garcia, the villain, intended to murder me. He knew my condition. Garcia, murderer, murderer, mur——"

In the early morning Duemont died.

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If the documents in Madame Duemont's suit against Garcia are still on file in the courts of New Orleans, they will be found dingy and perhaps worm eaten. The papers were pigeon-holed long years ago. When Madame Duemont recovered from an attack of fever, some weeks after her husband's death, she was, according to the story handed down by the gossipers of the day, much changed in temperament, although a beautiful woman she remained. It was common talk in certain circles that Garcia deliberately murdered old Duemont, fully understanding and anticipating the effect of a challenge on a man convalescing from the fever. So it would seem that Madame had some ground for making her sensational demand on Garcia. The courts, however, move slowly, and before the time for trial came the Madame went on a journey up the river. Garcia disappeared and his property was sold to pay his debts, which, it appears, were not entirely wiped out by the sale of the property. Gossip pursued the two after they left New Orleans, but no one could speak with a degree of certainty. On the one hand it was said that the Madame became a recluse on her old plantation; on the other hand it was said Garcia laid successful suit to her hand, and afterwards avoided his creditors. One day Garcia's body was picked up in the river a few miles below Madame's plantation.

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

India ink is made in Japan from the soot obtained by burning the shells of an oily nut.

A single pair of Australian rabbits can, if unchecked, multiply in four years to 1,250,000.

A million pounds' worth of fresh-coined silver pieces of British money weighs over 151 tons, 10 cwt.

No port of the world except Liverpool sends over as many emigrants to America as does Bremen.

The longest fence in the world is in Australia—1,256 miles. It is made of wire netting and its object is to keep out rabbits.

Of one thousand men who marry, 332 marry younger women, 579 marry women of the same age and eighty-nine marry older women.

The clay pipe smoked by Miles Standish in his friendly treaties with the Indians is a part of the government's exhibit at the exposition.

More women than men go blind in Sweden, Norway and Ireland; more men than women in the rest of Europe and the United States.

The net loss of the Philadelphia exposition, in 1876, was found to be $3,000,000; that of the Paris exposition, in 1889, about twice as much.

A curious tree growth is noted near Ellenville, N. Y., where a hemlock and an oak have become perfectly joined at a height of about ten feet.

The Red sea is for the most part blue. It gets its name from those small portions of it covered by minute animalculæ who dye the surface of the water red.

Petroleum, which is popularly supposed to be derived from coal, is, according to advanced science, more probably the result of the action of water on metal.

It is said to cost less to send the product of an acre of wheat from Dakota to England than it does to manure an acre of land in England so that it can grow good wheat.

Assuming the working age to be from twenty to thirty years, and counting only male workers, 440 persons in this country live on the work of every one hundred workers.

Lightning is zigzag because, as it condenses the air in the immediate advance of its path, it flies from side to side in order to pass where there is the least resistance to its progress.

Should the earth collide with another world of equal bulk it is claimed that the heat generated would be sufficient to melt, boil and completely evaporize a mass of ice fully seven hundred times the bulk of both the colliding worlds—in other words, an ice planet 150,000 miles in diameter.

It is reported that never in the history of the Erie canal has the canal-boat business been so brisk as it is at present. The immense shipments of wheat are responsible for the increase.

The human hair is absolutely the most profitable crop that grows. Five tons of it are annually imported by the merchants of London. The Parisians harvest upward of 200,000 pounds, equal in value to £80,000 per annum.

The chief distinction between the appearance of the male and the female Japanese lies in the hair. The men shave nearly the whole of the head, while the women allow it to grow, and even add to it by art when required.

During the reign of Henry VIII 71,400 persons were legally executed in England, the larger portion of whom were guilty of no offense worse than misdemeanor. In one year three hundred starving beggars were hanged for asking alms.

A primitive wooden lock, used in Bolivia, has a curious history, which goes back to the time of old Egypt. It is, in fact, the ancient Egyptian lock which was carried to central Africa by the Arabs, and from thence by the negro slaves to South America.

The custom of throwing a shoe after a bride comes from the Jewish custom of handing a shoe to a purchaser after the completion of a contract. (Ruth, iv, 7.) Parents also gave a shoe to the husband on a daughter's marriage, to signify the yielding up of their authority.

At all public demonstrations in London, expected to attract large numbers of spectators, a system of hand signaling will be adopted by the police, so that by a code passed from official to official, men held in reserve at any given point can be instantly centered at a scene of disturbance.

The famous "rock in Horeb," being the identical rock which Moses struck with his rod in order to to give water to the children of Israel, is religiously preserved, even down to this late date. It is a block of granite, about six yards square, lying tottering and loose in the middle of the valley of Repnidim.

The Llano Estacado is perhaps the most arid spot in the United States east of the Rockies. Scarcely any rain falls on it. The steppes owe their name of Staked Plains to the posts set up through the wilderness to guide the traveler or the caravan, or, according to another explanation, to the stalks of yucca plants growing on them.

The Central Peruvian railway across the Andes starts from sea level at Callao. It crosses the Andes range to Oroya, 136 miles from the coast. At the seventh mile it is five hundred feet above the level of the sea. At the fiftieth mile the elevation is about six thousand feet, and the ascent is steady and rapid until it reaches its highest point at the one hundred and sixth mile, when the height is 15,665 feet.

HUMOR OF THE DAY.

Juvenile Economy.

Good News.

Teacher—What is economy?

Boy—Buying cheaper things than your mother sends you for, so as to have some money left for candy.

Reassuring Her.

Life.

She—Am I the first girl you ever proposed to, darling?

He (sincerely)—No; but you are the only girl who ever accepted me.

The Worm Turns.

New York Weekly.

Publisher (testily)—I can't see anything in that manuscript of yours.

Struggling Author (vindictively)—I presume not; but you know some of your readers may be quite intelligent.

The Point of View.

Puck.

Mr. Jones (in florist's)—Well, Miss Rose, how's business to-day?

Miss Rose—It's been kind of dull for the past couple of days, but Colonel Graves's funeral will brighten things up a bit today.

The Way He Fixed It.

Tid Bits.

"Good morning, Uncle Charles! Did you sleep well? I'm afraid your bed was rather hard and uneven, but——" "Oh, it was all right, thank you. I got up now and then during the night and rested a bit, you know."

Quite a Farmer.

Life

Thistles—Johnson is getting to be quite a farmer since he moved over to Jersey.

Figs—So?

Thistles—Yep; he made a garden and sold the truck for enough to pay for the seeds, all but $15.

Where the Hurry Stops.

Good News.

Lady—Where did you get this pretty doll?

Little Girl—I forget the name of the place, but it's that great big store where everybody is in a hurry except the ones that make change.

Began at the Wrong End.

Vogue.

"We had a terrible time with the convention of physicians in our city the other day."

"What about?"

"They found a disease, and then couldn't discover a microbe for it."

The Harmless Way.

Philadelphia Music and Drama.

Maud—Oh! do come and have a swim with me, Jessie.

Jessie—No, thanks, I'd rather not; besides, it's very bad to swim on an empty stomach.

Maud—Well, but you can float on your back!

Falling Off in the Family.

Tammany Times.

Jones—How big a family have you got now, Smith?

Smith—I've got two boys and part of a boy.

Jones—How's that? Only part of a boy?

Smith—Some of his fingers are missing. Fourth of July, you know.

A New Version.

Boston Transcript.

Mamma—Come, Johnny, say your verse for the lady.

Johnny—In the multitude of counselors there is a bicycle.

Mamma—Why, Johnny! "There is safety," not "a bicycle."

Johnny—Well, what's the diff?

Room at the Top.

New York Weekly.

Merchant—Have you had any experience in china ware?

Applicant—Years of it, sir.

"What do you do when you break a valuable piece?"

"Well—er—I usually set it together again, and put it where some customer will knock it over."

"You'll do."

Modern Greatness.

Good News.

First Boy—I'm writin' a composition, and I can't think of what the teacher read the other day. It began "Some men is born great."

Second Boy—I remember. "Some is born great, and some achieve greatness, and —and"

First Boy—Oh, yes, I remember now. "And some gets cured of long-standin' diseases."

BITS OF FASHION.

Yellow is a color that appears to be growing more and more in favor, especially in the domain of millinery.

Low-necked linings, under high-waisted corsages of diaphanous fabrics, are seen at all fashionable summer resorts. The sleeves, as a rule, are unlined, but made excessively full.

The duck suits, though very much worn and very stylish in appearance, have been discovered to be quite too warm for comfort, as their close weave makes them almost as heavy as cloth. White, as always, is a summer favorite, beloved by the youthful and the old alike.

Says the New York Evening Post: The straw sailor hat of '93 cannot by any process of reason be called dressy, but it is without doubt neat, natty and practical. It is seen everywhere—on the city streets, at fashionable resorts, at church, funerals, weddings, garden parties—and it is worn alike by maid and matron, the latter donning it in many cases because it is absolutely the only hat she can wear sensibly and becomingly, because there is no frippery about the trimming, and no fancy angles or curves about either crown or brim.

The short Eton jacket has a formidable rival in the coat reaching to the knees, which is a prime favorite with tailors at this season, who are making up gowns by the hundred in this fashion for those who have discovered that the more jaunty garment was not quite as becoming as it might be.

Princesse dresses fastened at the back with waists shaped to the figure by narrow lengthwise tucks, and trimmed with drooping lace bretelles, are made of pale ecru batiste over slips of yellow or palest pink silk, or else the cooler lining of batiste like the dress. These are garnished with ecru guipure lace and watered ribbon.

Nearly all the pretty zephyrs, lawns and French batistes are finished on the skirt hem with tiny ruches or small lapping frills made of the dress goods. Some of the ruffles have a tiny edge of Valenciennes or torchon lace, and the entire width of the three frills does not exceed three inches. A similar set is placed half way up the length of the skirt.

HOW THE OCEAN BECAME SALT.

Scientific Theory as to the Salinification of the Mighty Seas.

London Standard.

Prof. Edward Hill read a paper before the Victoria Institute recently on "How the Waters of the Ocean Became Salt." From an inquiry into the character and affinities of the organic forms of past geological ages the conclusion was justified that the waters of the ocean must have been salt from very early geological times, but it by no means followed that they were as fully saline as those of the present day. There were two ways by which they might account for the salinity of the ocean waters from very early periods of geological time. First, by supposing that the primeval waters were saturated with acid gases which were held in suspension in the vapor surrounding the incandescent globe; or, secondly, that the salinity resulted from a process resembling that by which salt lakes of the present day had been formed. He thought that they must concur with Dr. Sterry Hunt, that from some cause or other chlorine largely abounded in the waters of the primeval ocean, as by far the greater proportion of the salts were chlorides, and chlorine was but very slightly represented in river waters of the present day.

From the examples of closed lakes they could determine the process of salinification with the utmost certainty. Throughout greater or shorter periods these lakes had been receiving the waters of rivers, bringing down both mechanically suspended sediments and chemically dissolved salts, silicates and carbonates. The sediments were precipitated over the bottoms of the lakes, and, the water being carried off into the atmosphere in the form of vapor as far as it entered, left behind the dissolved ingredients. These necessarily augmented in quantity, and ultimately the waters of the lakes became saturated with salts and carbonates. The ocean was a closed lake of enormous magnitude, and they were thus brought to the conclusion that the saltness of the sea might have originated in much the same way as had that of the Dead sea, Lake Oroomiah, or the Great Salt lake of Utah, and many others which possessed in common the characteristic of having no outlet. When the great envelope of vapor which surrounded the incandescent globe began to condense upon its cooling surface the resulting waters, though containing, as Dr. Sterry Hunt supposed, acid gases, were destitute of saline ingredients. The process of salinification began with the first streams which entered the seas from the bordering uplands, and this process carried on throughout the long ages preceding the silurian period, brought the water to a condition suited to sustain the life and forms of inhabitants representative of those which inhabited the ocean at the present day. These long ages might be supposed to include not only the archæan and azoic periods, but that during which the first crust was in course of formation over the incandescent globe.

Flowers for the Dead.

Pittsburg Chronicle-Telegraph.

The custom that made it bad form to use any but pure white blossoms for the dead is, it seems, going out. Some of the handsomest floral remembrances sent by prominent society people to one of their number who died last week, included jacqueminot roses, pink and purple sweet peas and yellow roses. The offerings were far prettier than the stiff, old-fashioned "gates ajar" and other funeral monstrosities so long in vogue. They were in bonquets daintily knotted with ribbon, or in dainty baskets, and some of them might, from all appearance, have served as well for a girl graduate or a pretty debutante.